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One-Day Class Addresses Animal Issues in Disasters Course Scheduled in Marshall County

(24 June 2008)—There's still time to sign up for the Animal Issues in Disasters class coming to Marshall County on Wednesday, July 30, 2008. This one-day class is available at no charge to anyone who wants or needs to know how natural and man-made disasters can impact animals and their owners.

When a flood or tornado strikes a community, people often have the option to evacuate to a local relief shelter; but what about their animals? Most emergency shelters do not provide for pets or livestock.

Those lessons were driven home in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when images of abandoned pets and livestock flooded the airwaves. The staff of the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH), in cooperation with the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, is working to ensure that does not happen in a large-scale event here at home.

That's why BOAH offers the Animal Issues in Disasters course to train local officials, first responders and potential volunteers about planning and response issues. A portion of the class is also devoted to increasing understanding of response plans for animal health-related emergencies, such as foot-and-mouth disease or avian flu.

Veterinarians and technicians, animal/humane shelter workers, livestock owners, local first responders and others who may be called upon to help in a disaster will benefit from the Animal Issues in Disasters class. During the day's sessions, participants will actually begin the process of writing an animal-oriented disaster plan for their local community.

The course, to be taught July 30, 2008, starting at 8:30 am, at the Argos United Methodist Church Community Life Center (570 N. Michigan; Argos, IN 46501), will cover a broad range of animal-related topics:

- How vulnerable are local animal populations to potential disasters?
- Impact of a foreign animal disease on local communities;
- Biosecurity issues in combating a foreign animal disease;
- What response activities need to occur to help livestock, pets and wildlife;
- How to establish a pet-friendly shelter;
- Community-wide preparedness planning;
- Recruiting and training volunteers;
- Building animal response network; and
- Resource identification.

Many professional organizations, including the Indiana Veterinary Medical Association, offer continuing education credit for completing this class. Interested participants should contact their professional affiliate to verify eligibility.

The class is offered at no charge. Pre-registration is required by July 21, 2008. To enroll, participants need to complete the attached enrollment application. The application is also available on-line at www.boah.in.gov and click on the "What's New" section or by calling the Board of Animal Health at 317/227-0375.